



AETC News Clips

Air Force Times



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10 May 06

Lieutenants to learn Wednesday if they can stay in

By [Rod Hafemeister](#)

Times staff writer

SAN ANTONIO — The wait is almost over for more than 2,000 Air Force lieutenants — they'll be told Wednesday the results of April's force shaping board.

And for the 895 expected to be told they must leave active duty, there will be decisions to make: They can try to transfer to the Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve, or they can apply to join the Army under the "Blue to Green" program.

The force-shaping board convened April 10 to decide which lieutenants would "not be selected for retention." The goal was to separate 708 lieutenants in the 2002 year group (that's 46 percent of the 1,536 still eligible) and 187 of the 549 eligible in the 2003 year group — or 34 percent.

The board's results were approved by the Air Force secretary May 3, and lists of both selects and nonselects were transmitted to senior raters and their support staffs over the weekend, officials said. Senior raters are expected to personally notify on Wednesday both those selected for retention and those not selected.

No names will be released publicly.

With a few exceptions, those not selected for retention must separate before Sept. 29. The exceptions include those officers pending court-martial or administrative discharges. Nevertheless, if they are not discharged through those actions, they will still be made to separate under the force-shaping program.

Nonselects may request an earlier separation date.

Other key points:

- Assignments within the continental United States will be cancelled for retention nonselects.
- Nonselects at overseas locations are encouraged to voluntarily extend the date they're eligible to return from overseas to match their date of separation. If not, they must request a permanent change of station to the continental U.S. no later than five duty days after receiving the non-selection letter.

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- Currently deployed officers not selected for retention should be returned before Aug. 30 for separation processing. Officers not selected for retention should not be deployed after the release of the board results.
- Nonselects may request a transfer to the Guard or Reserve under Palace Chase or to the Army under Blue to Green, but, if approved, such separation will be considered voluntary and therefore the officer will not be entitled to involuntary separation benefits. To avoid a break in service, Palace Chase applications must be submitted by Aug. 1. Blue to Green applications must be submitted by June 15.
- There is no provision to appeal the separation decision. However, if an officer believes there were errors in his or her record that led to their non-selection, he or she may apply for supplemental consideration from the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records. An appeal will not change their projected separation date, however.
- Officers with six or more years of active service at time of separation are entitled to involuntary separation pay. Information on it will be included with the notification letter.
- Officers not selected for retention will not be required to repay any unrecovered educational costs, including Air Force Academy and ROTC scholarship costs.

Air Force leaders announced the separation plans last fall, saying it was necessary to separate more than 1,700 lieutenants to deal with imbalances in certain career fields in the 2002 and 2003 year groups. About half of that number opted to leave active duty under various voluntary programs.

In the future, officials plan to hold an annual board to consider lieutenants for separation during their fourth year of commissioned service.

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Report: Collision with vulture caused Talon crash

Instructor says midair impact 'like an explosion'

By [Bruce Rolfson](#)

Times staff writer

As a T-38C Talon flew a low-level mission over southern Texas on Dec. 13, the student pilot in the front seat, 2nd Lt. Jonathan Ballard, spotted a bird about 10 feet in front of the plane.

There was no time to react.

The jet, flying about 400 mph at 1,057 feet, smashed into the bird. The impact tore away the top of the T-38C's cockpit canopy, blasting Ballard and instructor pilot Maj. Marc Montgomery with wind and noise and showering them with bird parts and canopy pieces.

"It was literally like an explosion," Montgomery recalled in a May 3 interview with Air Force Times.

Montgomery, a full-time reservist, is back at work with the 47th Flying Training Wing at Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, still recovering from burns suffered after he ejected.

Ballard wasn't injured. He graduated from Laughlin on Jan. 20 and is training at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, to fly as a T-38C instructor.

In a report issued May 1, an accident investigation board said the twin-engine Talon was brought down by a black vulture, a bird that typically weighs about 5 pounds.

The impact destroyed the top of the canopy and severely reduced the Talon's aerodynamics, causing the plane to seemingly lose engine power, the report said.

Because the T-38C lost speed, Montgomery mistakenly concluded the problem was due to the jet's twin engines sucking in bird parts and canopy debris, the report said.

Board president Col. Randell S. Meyer, the inspector general for the 56th Fighter Wing, Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., wrote that an average pilot given the same extreme situation would have reacted the same way.

Meyer, who had to eject from an F-16 in 1998, also noted the limits of the T-38C's simulator make it impossible for instructors to replicate such an emergency.

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After the canopy was blasted away, Montgomery spent almost 2½ minutes running through checklists trying to figure out why the plane had lost power.

“The training keeps you going step by step,” Montgomery said.

But when the jet went into a stall and began falling, Montgomery ordered Ballard to eject as the plane was below 550 feet. Montgomery bailed out a fraction of a second later as the plane fell below 500 feet.

As Montgomery’s ejection seat rocketed him out of the plane, his helmet visor was blown off. later, as he drifted to the ground under an open parachute, Montgomery tried to steer himself away from the crashed jet’s fireball, but he couldn’t avoid the fire. He landed in a burning mesquite tree.

After rescue teams reached the pilots, Montgomery was airlifted to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, where the major spent three weeks before returning home.

Among his bedside visitors was President Bush, who was at Brooke to talk with patients over the holidays.

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